REVIEW

(10)

OF A

PAMPHLET,

ENTITLED

"*Moral Agency, or Natural Ability consistent with Moral Inability; being Remarks on 'An Essay on the Inability of Sinners, by a Presbyterian;' by a Christian:*"

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BY A PRESBYTERIAN.

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REVIEW

Of Christian on Moral Agency.

We have been accustomed to believe, in regard to argumentative discussions, that a writer was at liberty to give or withhold his name from the public as he pleased, and to assume any signature he might deem appropriate to his work. But the author under review, censures the author of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," for styling himself "*A Presbyterian*," and withholding his name; and accuses him with "virtually denying, by his signature, that those who differ from him are" *Presbyterians.* p. 4. In these remarks we cannot concur. The Presbyterian deserves no censure for assuming a characteristic signature; nor can the inference which our author attempts to draw from it be fairly deduced.

Is it not truly astonishing that he should be guilty of doing the very deeds which he condemns as dishonourable and criminal in another? He has concealed his name. He has assumed, not the humble title of *Presbyterian*, but the noble title of *Christian.*

We have justified the man whom he condemns; but we cannot justify him; because he has acted in opposition to his own judgment. Some excuse may be pleaded for a person who acts on a mistaken principle, at least in extenuation of his offence; but no excuse can be pleaded for a person who acts contrary to his own principles, at the very time he is passing judgment on another for vio-

lating these principles. By the advent of our Lord, the distinction between clean and unclean meats, which had been established by the Levitical law, was abolished; and it became perfectly lawful to eat any kind of animal food. Many, however, long accustomed to the yoke of circumcision, could not receive and enjoy the proffered liberty. Their conscience was still hampered by restraints to which they had from their childhood been subject. Such were unable to do without sin what a Christian better instructed and established could do with perfect innocence. "I know, and am persuaded, says Paul, by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean in itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean." "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Rom. xiv. 14. 23.

How happened it that our author had not the sagacity to discover, that an inference of a much more serious import could, on his own principle, be drawn from the title he has assumed? It shall be expressed in his own words, with a single alteration. "The writer of the essay has substituted the appellative term '*Christian*,' and withholden his name. By such signature, he virtually denies the character to those who differ from him." p. 4. Thus, while he accuses his brother of being so uncharitable as to reprobate all who do not embrace his views as unworthy to wear the name of Presbyterian, he himself, by a similar process, denounces all who will not receive his dogmas, as unworthy to be called *Christians*. It is true, that immediately after informing us of the honourable title by which he wishes to be known, he condescends to admit the *Presbyterian* to have a just claim to the character of a follower of Christ, at the very moment he condemns his essay as *unchristian*. But this admission only exposes the futility of the inference he has drawn from a signature, and may incline the reader to believe his condemnation of the Essay to be as groundless as his inference is weak.

A fact shall be stated, not because it is important in itself, but because it may be of service to our brother, and induce him hereafter to examine more carefully his pre-

mises before he draws his conclusions, and to investigate with greater accuracy the grounds on which he rests his accusations before he makes them. The fact is this: the writer of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners" sent it to the conductors of the "Evangelical Guardian and Review," without signature; and either they, or the editor, affixed to it the appellative term "*Presbyterian*," which has given our sensitive *Christian* so much offence. Not even a shadow is left as the basis of his serious accusation. Suppose the essay on "MORAL AGENCY" had been forwarded, without signature, to the conductors of a Magazine, would they, after examining the *temper* in which it appears to have been written, have felt disposed to append to it that lovely name *Christian*?

From such a beginning what may not be expected? Shall we be surprised to hear, from a man who does the very things he condemns in a brother, and founds a serious charge on so trifling a matter as a signature, other accusations still severer, but still as groundless? The author of "MORAL AGENCY" charges the writer of the other essay, with having injured the character of his two brethren at Newark; condemns his essay, as already noticed, as being UNCHRISTIAN; and represents it as an offence of so serious a nature, that the writer ought deeply to repent of what he has done; and is confident, that if he do not perceive his guilt at present, he will certainly see it hereafter. p. 7, 8.

But what has the Presbyterian done, to excite such bitter accusations? Has he really slandered his brethren? Has he charged them with immorality of conduct, or arraigned their motives? We have read the Essay, but we cannot perceive any thing of the kind. What then has the *Presbyterian* done? Why, reader, he has published his sentiments on an important point in theology; and, in the course of his discussion, has animadverted on language used by his brethren, in their publications on the same subject, and endeavoured, by an appeal to the standard of our church, and to the form of sound words, used by inspired writers, to prove their language to be unwarrantable. These same brethren, let it be observed, had previously allowed themselves the same liberty of

contesting the opinions of those who differ from them. Such liberty is enjoyed by every Presbyterian; and he may use it freely, provided in disputing the opinions of others, he do not assail the doctrines of that church which he has solemnly professed to believe to be true and scriptural.

To what, then, is the acrimony apparent in the production under review to be ascribed? In animadverting on the language of others, it seems the Presbyterian has censured language which *Christian* approves, and is inclined to use. He *feels*; and will it be an offence against charity, to assign *pride of opinion*, as the cause of his unfounded accusation? Had the author of "Moral Agency," preserved that decorum which should always characterise theological controversy, he might have made his arguments as keen and sharp as possible; and the brother, whom he has selected as his antagonist, would have had no ground of complaint. But when a writer, under the sacred name of *Christian*, violates the rules of religious debates, we feel constrained to enter our *solemn protest* against his conduct.

If the reader have not seen already sufficient to warrant our protest, it will be impossible for him not to justify us, when we shall have directed his attention to a few more passages in the Essay. Turn to p. 7, and you will find one, in which, after speaking of the Presbyterian's withholding his name, he observes, "This *inability* being mere disinclination, and referrible to the moral conduct of the pious author, is termed a *moral inability*, a phrase, which, though not universally, is nevertheless generally, identified with *immorality*."*

* The author contends earnestly for the *natural ability* of man; but he exercised but little *natural sagacity* when he penned the above observation. He was handling a dangerous weapon; and it is surprising, he did not perceive how easily it might be wrested from his hands, and turned with its sharpest edge against himself. Let the remark be applied to the author of "Moral Agency," who has withholden his name, although he has censured another, as being guilty of a criminal offence for doing so; and it will read thus: "This inability being mere disinclination, and referrible to the moral conduct of the pious author, is termed a *moral inability*; a phrase, which, though not universally, is nevertheless generally, identified with *immorality*."

In p. 13. he observes, "What could, therefore, have induced his *deliberate choice* of ambiguity, by passing from the divided sense of the term *ability*, to that which is compounded, it is difficult to perceive, and unpleasant even to conjecture." In p. 29 we find a most unwarrantable accusation, as groundless as it is unjust,† thus expressed: "This is pointing with the finger a wrong direction to the inquiring traveller, without venturing to speak in terms what the *conscience* must have *forbidden*. Mr. Fuller was in this also correct, and *the Christian fears he was seen to be so.*" In this passage, he imputes *wilful deception* to his brother.

Such is the strange and inconsistent conduct of the author of "Moral Agency." He censures his brother for assuming the name, *Presbyterian;* and yet he himself has assumed the noble name, *Christian.* He complains that his brother has withholden his name; and yet he has withheld his own name. He accuses his brother with injuring the character of his brother, merely because he has animadverted on what he deems incorrect language in the exhibition of important truth, and yet he reflects on the *motives* of his brother, and without any sufficient grounds whatever, accuses him of *wilful deception.* Can one reader be found who will not unite with us in asserting, that this author deserves the cutting rebuke which the apostle gave his countrymen? "Therefore thou art *inexcusable*, O man, *whosoever* thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest *another* thou condemnest *thyself;* for *thou* that judgest *doest* THE SAME THINGS." Does his conduct exhibit "any virtuous *ingenuousness*, or an holy boldness in vindicating the cause of God?"‡ Is *he* not the man who has attempted to wound, "by an arrow sent from the bow of an archer who lies *concealed* behind the hedge?"§

Against the stroke of such a weapon, the *Presbyterian* is shielded by a consciousness of having done nothing wrong in withholding his name; while a consciousness of having acted against the judgment of his own mind in withholding his name, must deprive *Christian* of every protection, and leave his head naked and bare to the edge of a weapon forged by himself.

† See Inability, p. 19, 20. Had *Christian* noted these pages, his readers might have turned to them.

‡ Moral Agency, p. 7.

§ Moral Agency, p. 8.

Having uttered his complaints against the author of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," for assuming an *appellative*, and withholding his *proper* name, he assails the tendency of his production. "Many Presbyterians discern in it, with *sorrow*, a representation by far too comforting to the impenitent, and an apology for sinning, not to be found in the writings of the oldest and best divines."* Who these Presbyterians are we know not; nor is it necessary to inquire. But as he attempts to prove its bad tendency, by referring to a part of the Essay, let us compare his remarks with the passage on which he founds them. "Whatever may have been intended," says the *Christian*, in p. 13, "the Essay does furnish the sinner with a defence against his conscience, when it shows, in this connexion, that the law requires all the heart, soul, and might, and neither sinner nor saint, not Paul himself, could perform it. Does the reverend author mean to say, that the laws of God require more than the holy exercise of all the natural powers of man? Or does he wish, by blending the idea of moral inability, that is, the carnal enmity of the sinner with his natural, that is, his physical defect, to furnish him with a defence for sin? The piety of the essayist forbids this supposition; yet the obvious effect of his argument is to show that the believer may be *pitied*, not *blamed*." It would seem from these remarks, that the passage referred to was hard to be understood, and that certainly its tendency was to excuse sin; but to convince the reader how mistaken the judgment of *Christian* is in this matter, as well as that the passage is perfectly plain, it will be sufficient to transcribe it.

"As the fundamental precept of his law, Jehovah proclaims, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might:'† and has any unregenerate sinner ability to fulfil this great commandment, in all its extent, and thus to keep the whole law? Where is the saint living, sanctified as he may be by the grace of his God, who, having reached this elevated point in obedience, has no more reason to complain of the languor of his love; no more reason to bewail the impotence of his depraved nature? Greater attainments in religion than those of the holy apostle Paul, it is presumed, were never made by any man; and did he imagine

* Moral Agency, p. 4. † Deuteronomy, vi. 5.

himself possessed of *full ability* to keep the law of God perfectly, when in the bitterness of his spirit he exclaimed, 'Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'" p. 4.

Can any thing be found in this passage to justify the absurd question, "Does the reverend author mean to say, that the laws of God require more than the holy exercise of all the natural powers of man?" Is there a word about *physical defect?* Does it contain the most distant intimation that the believer is to be *pitied*, but *not blamed?* If such be the reason of the sorrow experienced by those good Presbyterians, *they* are indeed to be *pitied.*

As the tendency of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," is called in question, let us examine this point a little.

That it furnishes an apology for sinning, is affirmed by Christian and his associates. But where is this apology to be found? Not in the passage on which he grounds his accusation. Where then? Does the author plead the inability of sinners as their excuse? Hear his own words:

"From this view of the condition of man by nature, the course to be pursued by a minister of the gospel is plain. He is to declare the truth, and the whole truth. While he insists on the requirements of the law, maintaining that it demands perfect and sinless obedience; let him not be afraid, openly and distinctly to announce the mortifying fact, that 'no mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.' By inculcating the former truth, his hearers will be convinced that their *impotence*, from whatever source it may arise, is CRIMINAL, *and furnishes them with* NO EXCUSE; because it does not release them from the obligations of duty, nor procure in their favour any abatement in the demands of God's holy law: and by inculcating the latter truth, they will be guarded against a mistaken reliance on their own strength, and admonished both of the necessity of depending on Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness, and of the duty of imploring, by earnest and importunate prayers, that grace which is free and all-sufficient for perishing and helpless sinners." p. 23.

Let the reader turn to p. 20, and he will see how the author, in answer to an objection, shows that the sinner's

inability is consistent with the full and unimpaired authority of the divine law; and consequently that it can furnish him with no excuse for disobedience. Indeed the blameable nature of sin is noticed in the very first paragraph of the Essay, and is assumed as a principle granted by both parties in the dispute.

The entire agreement between the language used by the author of that Essay and the language of the standards of the Presbyterian Church, has been shown by him, and must be admitted by every candid man; so that the imputation of furnishing an apology for sin must ultimately come on that form of sound words adopted in our excellent Confession of Faith, and Catechisms. The Christian believes the contrary. But when his proofs shall be examined, it will appear how vainly he attempts to make them speak a language to which they are not accustomed.

Here it will be proper to take notice of an accusation occurring towards the close of Christian's performance, because it is of the same nature with the charge against the tendency of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners." In p. 32 he brings this accusation against the author of that essay: "He has conceded to the *enemies of God and religion* what no sound Presbyterian can admit, that 'had man been originally created in his present state, the law by which he is governed would indeed have been disproportionate to his powers.'* Every infidel can immediately discern, in this concession, that the law of God is admitted to be at present disproportional to human powers; and if *natural ability*, and this is part of the concession, be wanting, the essayist will never be able to vindicate divine justice in the condemnation of the impenitent." To any one who looks at the passage quoted by *Christian*, it will be manifest that it says not a word about the want of *natural ability;* much less does it concede what he means, want of the *rational faculties* of man. Had he noted the page whence he took the quotation, the reader might have examined its connexion. Such an examination would

* We shall supply a deficiency that often occurs in the Essay under review. The reader will find this quotation from the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," in p. 20, and the quotation which immediately precedes it in p. 21.

have exposed the futility of his remark; for in the very next page (p. 21) it is apparent that the Presbyterian has made no such absurd concession.

The author of "Moral Agency," however, insists that a concession has been made which no *sound Presbyterian* can admit; and as he appeals, in the course of his essay, to the authority of Calvin to support his views, we shall beg leave to transcribe a passage from the writings of that great man, in which he maintains the very truth asserted by the Presbyterian. "If there were only a commandment, and no promise, there would be a trial of the sufficiency of our strength to obey the commandment; but since the commands are connected with promises, which declare that we must receive, not only *subsidiary* power, but our *whole strength* from the assistance of divine grace, they furnish abundant evidence that we are not only *unequal* to the observation of the law, but *altogether incapable* of it. Wherefore, let them no more urge *the* PROPORTION *of our ability to the precepts of the law*, as though the Lord had regulated the standard of righteousness which he designed to give in his law according to our *imbecility*." The whole paragraph is valuable, but too long for insertion. Instit. vol. 1. p. 341, 342.*. How exactly the language used by this celebrated reformer, accords with the language of the short quotation from the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners!" Of course Calvin was no *sound Presbyterian!*

Let us examine a little the import of the condemnation passed by Christian on the observation quoted by him. To say that "had man been originally created in his present state, the law by which he is governed, would have been disproportionate to his powers," is, he affirms, making an unwarrantable "concession to the enemies of God and religion:" consequently, the opposite proposition must, in his opinion, be true, that had man been originally created in his present state, the law would have been proportionate to his powers, and perfect obedience to it might have been justly demanded. What is just, God can do. It follows then, from this proposition, that God might *originally* have

* The quotations from "Calvin's Institutes" are taken from NICKLIN's edition of ALLEN's translation.

created man in his present corrupt and sinful state, and yet have placed him under a law exacting perfect and sinless obedience, under the penalty of a curse for every act of disobedience, and every instance of any want of conformity to it; and therefore have inflicted on him the punishment of eternal death for his transgressions. In other words, God might justly have created man at first with a sinful nature, and yet have punished him with his avenging wrath for being a sinner!!

Is this the way *Christian* takes to "vindicate Divine justice in the condemnation of the impenitent?" Such views of truth Calvin abominated, and so will all sound Presbyterians. "Now," says that great writer, "let us dismiss those who dare to charge God with their corruptions, because we say that men are naturally corrupt. They err in seeking for the work of God in their *own pollution*, whereas they should rather seek it in the *nature* of *Adam*, while yet *innocent* and *uncorrupted*."—"Wherefore, let us remember, that our fall must be imputed to a *corruption* of nature, that we may not bring an accusation against God himself, the Author of Nature. That this fatal wound is inherent in our nature, is indeed a truth; but it is an *important question*, whether it was in it ORIGINALLY, or was derived from any extraneous cause. But it is evident it was occasioned by sin. We have therefore no reason to complain but of ourselves; which in the scripture is distinctly remarked. For the Preacher says, 'This only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.'* It is clear that the misery of man must be ascribed solely to himself, since he was favoured with rectitude by the Divine goodness, but has lapsed into vanity by his own folly." Instit. vol. 1. p. 269. Let the reader compare this passage with a paragraph in p. 20. of the *Presbyterian's* essay, and he will see how exactly his views accord with those of Calvin.

The import of *Christian's* condemnation of the quotation from his brother's essay, leads to the shocking doctrine that God might be the author of sin. Still, however, as many good men hold sentiments, the tendency of which

* Eccles. vii. 29.

they do not perceive, we choose rather to venture to call his sagacity in question, than impute to him, unless he shall openly avow it, the belief of a doctrine at which the minds of all Christians should revolt with instinctive horror.

Having pointed out the gross inconsistencies of the writer under review, and shown that his apprehensions in regard to the tendency of the Essay he has attempted to answer, are unfounded, let us proceed to consider the manner in which he has conducted his reply, and the arguments he has invented.

The investigation will be facilitated, by showing his entire misapprehension of the design of that Essay, and the consequent most erroneous view which he has given of it. In p. 14, he says, "The Essay must be followed, not for the purpose of chasing a shadow, but to discover whether the writer can make out either from our standards, the scriptures, or experience, that man is condemned for any other *inability* than that which is *moral*." By *inability* different from that which is *moral*, this author means inability arising from the *want of the natural faculties that pertain to human nature*, as will appear from the preceding part of the paragraph from which we have taken the quotation. That this is his meaning, seems incontestible from a passage in p. 17, expressed in these words: "His scriptural proofs must now be examined, that we may know whether they declare man to be destitute of ALL *natural ability*, and also blame him for the defect." As long as a human being has the faculties of a rational being, he possesses some natural ability; and consequently no individual of our species can be destitute of ALL *natural ability*, while he retains his understanding, will, and affections. Again, in p. 19, he observes, "But it would be far otherwise, if *new faculties* were given in regeneration, which the party had not previously possessed. Such an inability would indemnify the transgressor. But that the unrenewed are defective of the *natural* ability necessary to the performance of the duties required of them, the reverend author of the Essay has not proved, nor can he do it. That such inability exists, it is believed, he never learned among *Presbyterians*, and consequently can

scarcely be justified for maintaining it under the name of a *Presbyterian.*" By "new faculties," in this passage, are evidently meant new *natural* faculties. This is apparent from the passage itself, and will appear still more evident from comparing it with its context, and especially with the preceding quotations.

The object, then, of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," was, according to the representation of this *candid* writer, to prove that unrenewed man is destitute of ALL *natural ability*,—that he is condemned for the want of the *rational* faculties inseparable from human nature,—and that by regeneration, *new* NATURAL *faculties* are communicated to the subjects of divine grace.

Now we venture to assert, that no candid reader can receive such an impression from a perusal of that Essay. No attempt whatever can be found in it to establish such monstrous absurdities; not a word to justify such gross misrepresentations. Here is the radical error of Christian. It runs through his whole production, not like *golden* threads, imparting beauty and strength, but like ROTTEN threads, imparting deformity and weakness to his reasoning. It is perfectly manifest, that a man who had so entirely misconceived the meaning of another, could not possibly write an intelligent answer to an essay which he did not understand. This accounts for the obscurity which pervades so large a portion of his remarks, and accounts too for the strange questions he asks, and the extravagant assertions he makes. Take a sample of each. In page 10, we meet with this question: "When the reverend author of the Essay declares to the impenitent, from the sacred desk, that they are dead in sin, does he mean that their understandings are *shallow*, their memories *bad*, and natural talents, because impaired by apostacy, incompetent?" In page 16, is recorded this round assertion: "He," (the Presbyterian,) "undoubtedly, therefore, intends by such language, to pass censure on those who hold and teach that the unrenewed have the *natural*, that is, the mental *powers* of understanding, memory, will and affections." On this assertion he gravely asks, "But must the truth be denied because the possession of such natural powers may, and often does, nourish a self-sufficient spirit?" The *Christian*

has passed a severe animadversion on his brother for using two notes of admiration, in order to convey his meaning in a forcible and lively manner; but notwithstanding the risk we shall run of being charged with duplicity, by this *charitable* writer, we shall give what we deem the best answer to such remarks, by putting down, not two, but *four!!!!*

The author of the Essay under review, has attempted to justify the interpretation he has put on the meaning of his brother author. He quotes this passage: "If the possession of these faculties constitute the ability of sinners, then they must be in such an unimpaired state as really to enable them to fulfil the requirement of the law, without the aid of any other power, or the mode of speaking, adopted by some divines, cannot be justified; because an ability that is not sufficient to perform any work, certainly cannot be denominated, with any propriety of speech, *full ability, ample power.*" Having transcribed this passage, he endeavours, (p. 25) to prove, that the inability contemplated by his brother was not of the *moral* kind, but consisted in such a destitution of natural faculties as renders disobedience excusable. Had he referred to the *page* in the Essay, the reader might, in the context, have found a refutation; for the passage is immediately preceded by a paragraph which states, that the author was not *then* combatting the language of such writers as Fuller, Smalley, and others, who, by "natural ability," mean the possession of the faculties of understanding, will and affections; but "exposing the impropriety of maintaining that sinners have *full ability* to do *all* that is required of them by the law of God:" and the passage is thus continued: (p. 10) "But the advocates of this phraseology allow the understanding to be blind, the will rebellious, and the affections perverse; and moreover maintain, that till sinners be born again, regenerated in a supernatural manner, created anew by Almighty power, they never will repent, never will believe, never will obey. Now, if these faculties must undergo a supernatural change before sinners can obtain that MORAL *ability* which is absolutely necessary to enable them to do their duty, what becomes of

their *full ability*, their *ample power?* That the unregenerate possess the *faculties belonging to human nature*, which make them *accountable creatures*, no one denies: this is not the question at issue; it is one widely different,—*Whether they possess* FULL ABILITY *to do whatever is required of them, while all their faculties are corrupted, disordered, and enfeebled by* SIN ?" In a similar strain the author continues his reasoning, and concludes the paragraph with this emphatic question—"Why, then, will they use language so grossly improper as that which we censure; and, in opposition to their own acknowledged principles, assert, that men, blind in their understandings, and in their hearts opposed to God, possess *full ability*, *ample power*, to fulfil all his good and holy will!"

A futile attempt is made by the author of "Moral Agency," (p. 19, 20,) to show, that the Essay assailed by him, inculcates it as a fact, that *new* NATURAL *faculties* are communicated in regeneration. If the reader will turn to p. 6 and 7 of that Essay, he will find a complete refutation of this gross misrepresentation; he will see that the writer speaks, not of new *natural* faculties, but of a new *spiritual principle*, or power; for the paragraph in p. 7, is thus concluded: "Animal life, and rational life, are combined in the same being, but they are principles and powers of action distinct and different from each other; and so is *spiritual* life a principle, a power, distinct and different from both." And does not our author inculcate the same truth? Can he believe that a man can be made spiritually alive unto God without receiving a power he did not possess before? Certainly he teaches that moral *ability* is communicated in regeneration: and what is this but a moral *power*, sometimes called a moral *faculty?** If then moral ability is communicated to the subjects of regenerating grace, *Christian* himself must allow, that *a new power*, *a new moral faculty* is given to them, of which they were previously destitute.

We shall notice one more of our author's unsuccessful attempts to maintain his radical misrepresentation. At the

* "FACULTY; the power of doing any thing; ability; whether corporal or intellectual."—*Johnson's Dict.*

bottom of p. 21, begins the following quotation: "His argument is, that *because man has not moral ability, he has no ability of any kind.*" In perusing the words we have put in italics, the reader is naturally led to suppose they are words found in the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," because they are marked as a quotation: and as no page is referred to, he cannot detect the fallacy of the impression, unless he will submit to the trouble of going over the whole Essay in fruitless search after these words. This deceptive quotation is immediately followed by an argument, to prove that the sinner has the faculties of "understanding, will and affections," in the course of which we meet with these words, (p. 22.) "Upon this view of ordinary Christian experience, let candour decide whether the inability felt by the penitent be not of the *moral kind*, and whether SOME *natural* powers be not necessary to justify condemnation for the abuse of them, and to produce a conviction of such sin." By asserting the inability of man to be of the *moral kind*, the author cannot mean to deny that he possesses *moral powers;* he intends, we presume, to teach that it is *sinful, blameable.* Consequently, he wishes the reader to believe, that the Essay he condemns as "an apology for sinning," asserts man's inability to be excusable, and labours, in support of this capital error, to establish the monstrous absurdity, that man has NO *natural ability of any kind*, or, in other words, that he has no understanding, will, or affections! In opposition to this gross misrepresentation, we might quote largely from the Essay. We content ourselves with one or two short paragraphs.

"When put to the test, the faculties of sinful man prove insufficient for the work required from him; and he learns the mortifying truth that he is indeed unable to perform his duty; not from the want of an understanding, but from the want of an enlightened understanding; not from the want of a will, but from the want of a subdued and holy will; not from the want of affections, but from the want of sanctified affections. And while his rational faculties are thus disabled by sin, he finds it as impossible to repent and believe, as it is for a paralytic to do the actions he was accustomed to do while his limbs were sound and vigorous." p. 8.

"When originally created, he (man) was endowed by his

Creator with *natural ability* to do *natural* actions, and with *moral ability* to do *moral* and *holy* actions; but by his apostacy he was deprived of the *latter*, though not of the *former*: and to assert that man, in his lapsed state, possesses ability to act in a *holy*, merely because he retains the power of acting in a *natural*, manner, is indeed absurd, and setting aside the use of the moral power altogether. While his heart remained pure and uncorrupted, he had both the power of speech, and the power of speaking in a holy way, by using his tongue to the glory of its Maker; but when his heart became polluted with sin, he lost the *latter*, though he retained the *former*, power: he could still do the natural action, but he could not do it in a holy manner; he could use his tongue in speaking, but he could not use it, as duty requires, to the glory of God." p. 14.

Referring to this paragraph, *Christian* observes, (p. 11,) "Some confusion has also arisen in the representations in the Essay, from an unusual acceptation of certain terms." Had he been better acquainted with the writings of that great man, whose authority he elsewhere pleads in support of his views, he would not have made this assertion. "And indeed," says Calvin, "I much approve of that common observation which has been borrowed from Augustine, that the *natural* talents in man have been corrupted by sin, but that of the *supernatural* ones he has been wholly deprived." That by natural talents Calvin means the mental faculties, understanding, will, and conscience, there can be no doubt; nor is there any reason to doubt, that by *supernatural* talents he intends *moral ability*, or a power to act in a holy manner; "for," explaining his meaning, he adds, "by the latter are intended both the light of faith and righteousness, which would be sufficient for the attainment of a heavenly life and eternal felicity. Therefore, when he revolted from the divine government, he was, at the same time, deprived of those *supernatural* endowments which had been given him for the hope of eternal salvation." Instit. vol. i. p. 284. Here is another instance of the coincidence between the language of Calvin and of the *Presbyterian*.

As the author of "Moral Agency" has so entirely misapprehended the meaning of the author of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," we deem it proper, in order to

facilitate our review, to state what manifestly appears to be the design of that Essay.

Let it be observed, then, that it was written, not to prove the sinner to be excusable in his disobedience; for it asserts and proves the contrary:—not to prove that the unregenerate are destitute of the mental faculties pertaining to human nature, even in its fallen state; for it distinctly names them, and considers any attempt to establish the fact that such faculties belong to apostate man, altogether superfluous:—not to destroy the distinction between natural and moral ability; for it admits the distinction, and illustrates it, by showing what unregenerate men can do, and what they cannot do:—but to prove that man, in his fallen state, without the renewing grace of God, is really *unable* (call the inability what you will) to keep the commandments of God in that pure and perfect manner which is demanded; and to expose the impropriety of using the language which some divines deem themselves authorised to use, such as this: "Sinners have *full ability* to repent and believe; they have *ample power* to do the will of God; he requires nothing above their strength."*

The writer of that Essay has not, as *Christian* asserts, misrepresented the sentiments of those authors on whose language he has animadverted. It was not presumption in him to suppose that others would read his Essay, as well as individuals who approve what he deems incorrect language; and therefore he very properly endeavoured to establish the *real inability* of fallen man, without wishing to impress any with a belief that his brethren at Newark deny the *moral inability* of sinners; for he derives arguments from their admission of this fact to show the impropriety of the language which he quotes from their writings. See pages 9, 10, 11.

After exposing the unqualified language already stated, the author of the Essay proceeds to state his "objections to the more guarded, but exceptionable language adopted by others;" and in that part of his discussion is found this remark: (p. 17.) "While, therefore, we admit it to be correct to say, he (man) possesses *natural*

* Page 3.

ability to perform actions which he *really* can do, we apprehend it to be incorrect to say, he has natural ability to obey the *whole will* of God: that is, to perform actions which he *really cannot* do."

To convince the reader of the correctness of this statement, we might refer him to almost every page of the Essay; but to save him the trouble of reading it for this purpose, we shall transcribe from p. 9, a paragraph which contains a summary of the author's preceding discussion, in connexion with another that immediately succeeds it:

"It appears, then, whether the appeal be made to the standards of our Church, or to the testimony of Christian experience, or to the oracles of the living God, that sinful man is unable to repent, to believe, or to do his will: and it follows, that the language on which we animadvert, is a manifest departure from the form of sound words used both in the Bible, and in that book which we acknowledge as the Confession of our Faith, and as containing a correct exhibition of revealed truth.

To justify themselves, preachers who use such language, will recur to a favourite distinction, and say they mean, not a *moral*, but a *natural*, ability. And why do they not keep in view this distinction? Why use such unqualified language? Why assert that man has full ability, ample power, when they intend only natural ability, in opposition to moral ability, of which they affirm he is destitute?" p. 9.

Such being the design of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," it is manifest that all the arguments of *Christian* to prove either the fact, that there is a *distinction* between natural and moral ability, or that the inability of fallen man is *moral* or blameable, can have no bearing in the way of an answer to that Essay. Strike out these arguments, and what have you left? Had he been disposed to give a candid reply, he might have saved himself much superfluous labour; he would have premised the particulars in which the disputants were agreed; he would have stated that the author of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," as well as the author of "Moral Agency," admitted and illustrated the distinction between natural and moral ability, and maintained the inability of sinful man to be *inexcusable*, or, in other words, *moral*. Having thus cleared the ARENA of every obstruction to a fair and ho-

nourable contest, he would have proceeded to justify, on these principles, admitted by both combatants, the unqualified expressions of our friend at Newark, or "the more guarded, but exceptionable language," used by our other friend residing in the same place, by Fuller, and others. He would have attempted to prove, that because unregenerate man possesses *natural ability*, or the faculties of understanding, will, and affections, which enable him to perceive many truths, to reason, judge, and determine, to love and hate different objects; therefore it follows, that he has *full ability, ample power* to do *moral* or *holy* actions, and to keep all the commandments of God in that pure and perfect manner which is required:—*full ability* to do all this, while the understanding is so blinded by sin, that it cannot perceive spiritual things, and knows duty but in an imperfect manner; while the will is so depraved and fettered by sin, that it cannot make one *holy* volition; and while the affections are so corrupted by the apostacy, that they are supremely set on earthly things and alienated from God. Having made such an unsuccessful attempt, he would have proceeded fairly to meet and answer the objections stated and urged against "the more guarded, but exceptionable language," that the sinner has *natural* ability to obey the will of God, or to do *moral* or *holy* actions; while he is destitute of that *moral* ability, without which, even in the opinion of the writers who use such language, it is *impossible* for him to perform his duty in a holy manner. All this would he have endeavoured to accomplish; and while making his fruitless attempt, he would have disdained to resort to the disingenuous artifice of confounding the two parts of the Essay, by applying reasoning designed to expose the impropriety of the unqualified language used by Doctor Griffin, to the more guarded expressions of Fuller and others.

Had the author of "Moral Agency" acted thus, he would have been an honourable combatant: and spectators of the contest would have enjoyed a fair opportunity of seeing distinctly the skill and prowess of the two antagonists. But he has acted otherwise. He has, by misrepresentations and disingenuous sophistry, raised a *cloud of dust* that obscures the sight of spectators, and conceals from

their view, in a considerable degree, the unskilfulness of his attacks, and the weakness of his efforts, while it has nearly suffocated himself in the combat.

These remarks will supply the reader of "Moral Agency" with a *clue* to find his way through that dark and intricate labyrinth of misrepresentation and sophistry.

To satisfy every one of the correctness of our statement, we proceed to examine a few of the author's arguments.

In his appeal to the Standards of our Church, the *Presbyterian* had, among other passages, cited from the Larger Catechism this answer to the 149th question:—"No man is *able*, either of *himself*, or *by any grace* received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed." This language certainly harmonises with the language used throughout his Essay; and it as manifestly differs from the language on which he has animadverted. *Christian*, however, supposes he has met his argument, by endeavouring to show that the inability of the sinner is of the *moral* kind. See p. 14, 15. But the subject of debate, let it be remembered, was not the *kind* of inability, but the propriety of certain expressions. If he could have shown in this answer, or in any other part of our Standards, that they ascribe *full ability*, *ample power* to man, he would have furnished a pertinent answer. Such expressions are no where to be found in those correct exhibitions of divine truth. In one place the words *natural liberty* occur; and the most is made of them by putting them in italics. In p. 5, he cites this passage from "our excellent Confession of Faith;" "God hath endowed the *will* of man with that *natural liberty*, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good or evil."* Whatever bearing he intended this section should have on the subject of dispute, we beg leave to observe, that the *natural liberty* of the *will* was not at all called in question by the writer whom he has assailed. The question of the debate was the impropriety of ascribing *full ability* to fallen man: and to show

* Chap. 9. Sec. 1.

the reader what aid might have been derived to the cause of the "Christian," by a further quotation from that same chapter, we shall transcribe the third section: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath *wholly* lost ALL ABILITY of *will* to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as a natural man being altogether averse from that which is good, and *dead* in sin, is *not able*, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereto." It is worthy of remark, that although in the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," (p. 15,) the whole of this section is cited, yet when the author of "Moral Agency" notices the quotation, he transcribes, not the forcible language of the first part of this section, in which it is expressly affirmed that man "hath *wholly* lost *all ability* of will to any spiritual good;" but only the latter part; and in explanation of it he asserts, that the words "*dead in sin*" "express a higher degree of *aversion to good*, which had been predicated of man in his natural and unrenewed state, and suppose the party to have no more disposition to things spiritual and holy, than a dead carcass possesses towards objects of sense," p. 15. We cannot acquiesce in this interpretation. We believe the words "*dead in sin*" were inserted in that section to express more than *simple aversion*, more than *mere indisposition;* to declare the fact that man is destitute of *spiritual* life, and that while destitute of this life, he is as *unable* to do *holy* actions, as "a dead carcass" is to smell, taste, see, move or do any of the actions of a living body.

But to prove that this inability of man consists only "*in the aversion of his heart to good*," Christian tells us, (p. 16,) "The prolocutor of the General Assembly who made the Confession, well understood and explained this distinction. It is not probable, that those who framed our Standards, would have made them speak the opposite of their own views of sound doctrine." This, however, is mere assertion; it contains no proof. The question is, what were their views? The author of Moral Agency has given his views, and tried to make our Standards harmonise with them. His interpretation we dispute: and to satisfy the reader of the correctness of our construction of the

part of the Confession referred to, the compilers of that "form of sound words," shall be their own interpreters. To the 192d question in the Larger Catechism, they give this answer: "In the third petition, (which is, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,*) acknowledging that by nature we and all men are not only *utterly unable* and *unwilling* to KNOW and do the will of God, but prone to rebel against his word, to repine and murmur against his providence, and wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh, and of the devil: We pray that God would, by his Spirit, take away from ourselves and others all *blindness, weakness, indisposedness*, and *perverseness of heart*, and by his grace make us ABLE and *willing* to *know*, do, and submit to his will in all things," &c. See also the answer to the 190th question.

The answer given by the author of "Moral Agency" to the argument of his brother derived from passages of holy scripture, which assert, in strong language, the *inability* of apostate man, is similar to that which has just been examined, and wanders in the same manner from the precise subject of debate. Instead of producing from the writings of inspired men, language like that which we have been obliged so often to repeat, "*full ability, ample power*," he imagines he has subdued his antagonist by proving the inability of man to be of a *moral kind*. p. 17. Nor is this the only fault in his reply. To obviate the difficulty in his way, arising from the accordance between the language of the *Presbyterian* and the language of our Lord, who affirms, "no man *can* come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him;" he presumes it to be equivalent to that reproof which the Saviour gave the Jews, when he said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life;" intimating that the inability lies *wholly* in the will, and amounts to nothing more than "native indisposition of the heart to moral good." p. 18. We believe with our Standards, that man is both *unable* and *unwilling* to come to Christ; and that divine grace, in drawing the sinner to the Redeemer, removes both impediments out of his way, by *inclining* and *enabling* him to believe. Accordingly we find, from the explanation which Christ has given of his own words, that the *blindness*

of the *mind* must be taken away, as well as the opposition of the will subdued; and that the former impediment is expressly contemplated, and the latter only by implication. It is the necessity of divine instruction, heavenly illumination, on which he insists. Now, instruction, illumination, have for their immediate object, not the will, but the *understanding*. "It is written in the prophets, that they shall all be *taught* of God. Every man, therefore, that hath *heard*, and hath *learned* of the Father, cometh unto me."* This having been directed to those who were possessed of an external revelation, and enjoyed the public ministry of Christ himself, it cannot be denied that our Lord asserts the necessity of a teaching distinct from that external teaching which arises from the ministry of the word; a teaching which is produced by a divine illuminating influence on the mind; a teaching, without which the reading and hearing of the word will never be accompanied with saving efficacy. But if the inability of the sinner proceeded *entirely* from the *will*; if the *understanding* were able to perceive spiritual truths, and needed no relief of that impotence and blindness in regard to divine things which sin has produced; where would be the necessity of this internal and heavenly illumination? It is plain, then, our Master being judge, that the understanding must be aided by spiritual illumination, as well as the will subdued, before sinful man will come to him, or believe in him to the saving of the soul; and that divine grace reaches the will *through the understanding*, or, in other words, that ordinarily divine grace operates *first* on the understanding, and then on the will.

Having thus stated the radical misconception of the author of "Moral Agency," in regard to the meaning of the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," and applied our statement to a few of his arguments, to show that in consequence of his leading error, they have no bearing on the subject of debate; we think we may relieve ourselves of the trouble of replying to his other arguments, as it would lead to a repetition of the same remarks, because the same error, and consequent misrepresentation, run more or less through all his subsequent reasoning.

*John vii. 45, 46.

In p. 32, our author seems to come to the point at issue; for there he observes: "Thus a person, who is destitute of moral ability, may possess *full and ample* NATURAL *ability* to perform his duty, and will, for that *very reason*, be brought into condemnation, seeing nothing but a want of heart, that is, a right disposition, or of moral ability, prevented his compliance." But even this passage is liable to the same remark: for the language on which the *Presbyterian* animadverted in the first part of his discussion, was language unqualified by the term *natural;* and in a subsequent part he stated his objections to the use of the more guarded language, "*natural ability* to do the WHOLE *will* of God; that is, to *perform actions which*" man "*really cannot do.*"

We have had more than one occasion already, in the course of this Review, to compare the views and language of the *Presbyterian* with those of *Calvin*, and to remark their agreement. The question shall now be taken up in a more formal maner. *Christian* has affirmed, that his brother's views of man's guilt widely differ from those of "the most approved writers;" and he attempts to prove his assertion particularly by quotations from the writings of that illustrious reformer. (See p. 33, 34.)

In regard to the quotations from Calvin, we are constrained to notice the same disingenuousness as we have seen pervading all the former part of his production. If it be inculcated in the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," that man is destitute of "reason;" that he has "no intelligence in any thing;" that the sinner has never any conviction of guilt; and that he does evil, by constraint, and not voluntarily: if such positions be maintained by the author of that essay, then indeed the quotations from Calvin are in point. But if no such monstrous absurdities are taught in that essay, then they have about as much force as many of the specious arguments in "Moral Agency;" that is,—*no force at all.*

Let every candid reader, after having examined carefully all the quotations from Calvin, ask himself what possible bearing they can have on the subject in debate. He will indeed see *reason* denominated a "*natural talent;*" and the two last words marked in italics, lest their force should

escape his notice. But who ever denied reason to be a natural talent? He will also see these words: "It is of great importance to examine *what ability* is retained by man in his present state." Now is it not natural for a reader of "*Moral Agency*" to receive, from this quotation taken in connexion with the scope of that essay, the impression that Calvin is exalting the ability of man? Had the author given the book and the page, an antidote might have been found in the writings of that great man; for there it appears, that the words just recited form but part of a sentence, which is completed by these words: "*corrupted in all the parts of his nature*, and deprived of supernatural gifts." Calvin continues his remarks: "This subject, therefore, has been treated in too philosophical a manner by those who gloried in being the disciples of Christ." Let the reader turn to the page and pursue the judicious remarks of the illustrious reformer.*

By examining the chapter from which the quotation is taken, the reader will be surprised to discover, that the object of it is to correct the error both of philosophers and of the fathers, who attributed *too much ability to fallen man.* After several quotations from Chrysostom and Jerome, Calvin remarks, "In these sentences you see they certainly attributed to man more than could be justly attributed to him towards the pursuit of virtue; because they supposed it impossible to awaken our innate *torpor*,† otherwise than by arguing *that this alone constitutes our guilt*, but with what dexterity they did it we shall see in the course of this work."‡

The following words of Augustine, cited by Calvin, are quoted by *Christian:* "Let no man dare so to deny the freedom of the will, as to desire to excuse sin." But why? Has the author of the Essay assailed by him denied the freedom of the will in order to excuse sin? He asserts nothing about the freedom of the will; he was treating of the inability of sinners. But where are these words to be found? In what volume, in what book, in what page of Calvin's voluminous writings? We are not told: and perhaps when we shall have finished our remarks on the

* Instit. vol. i. p. 275. † Compare "Moral Agency," p. 18. line 19.
‡ Instit. vol. i. p. 275.

quotation, it may be conjectured, that it was either *not convenient*, or *not in point*, to inform the reader. Having some acquaintance with the writings of this great man, we determined to go in quest of the quotation; and conjecturing, from its relation to the will, that it might be found in the chapter on the will in "Calvin's Institutes," we discovered it after a little search. And when we inform the reader that we found, that the whole observation of Augustine consists of but a *single* word more; that this word stands at the beginning of the observation; that it appears to be a *capital* word, influencing the entire aspect of the sentence; he will believe us when we say we were not a little surprised. In Calvin the whole observation of this celebrated father stands thus: "*Only* let no man dare so deny the freedom of the will, as to desire to excuse sin." Why did the author of "Moral Agency" omit the single word which we have put in italics? Would that single word have burdened his pages? Or was it by mistake, that he omitted the very first word of a short sentence, which was to do so much for him? Our surprise was increased, when, looking at this observation in the connexion in which it stands in Calvin's page, we found he was using it in order to prevent a misconception of the views of Augustine in relation to the human will; that very misconception which, it is apprehended, will be received by common readers from the quotation as exhibited in "Moral Agency." To satisfy every impartial person, we shall transcribe the remarks of Calvin. Speaking of the fathers, he says,

"First of all, Augustine, who hesitates not to call the will a *slave*. He expresses his displeasure in one place against those who deny free will: but he declares his principal reason for it, when he says, '*Only* let no man dare so deny the freedom of the will, as to desire to excuse sin.' Elsewhere he plainly confesses that the human will is not free without the Spirit, since it is subject to its lusts, by which it is conquered and bound. Again, that when the will was overcome by the sin into which it fell, nature began to be destitute of liberty. Again, that man having made wrong use of his free will, lost both it and himself. Again, that free will is in a state of captivity, so that it can do nothing towards righteousness. Again, that the will cannot be free, which has not been liberated by Divine grace."

Other quotations of a similar kind follow, which we forbear to transcribe, but hope the reader will peruse them. Instit. vol. i. p. 274.

If the reader will turn to the sixth section of the 5th chap. of Calvin's Instit. p. 337. vol. i. he will find there, and in the following sections, how exactly the views of the *Presbyterian* harmonize with those of that great man, and consequently how widely Calvin differs from *Christian*, in his judgment in regard to the language proper to be used in treating of the inability of man. Speaking of the opponents of his doctrine, he says, "They urge farther, that exhortations are given in vain, that the use of admonitions is superfluous, and that reproofs are ridiculous, if it be not in the *power* of the sinner to obey." To meet this very objection, the phrases condemned by the "Essay on the Inability of Sinners," are used. Present this objection to the author of Park Street Lectures, and he will cut the knot at once, by affirming, that the sinner has *ample power, full ability;* and as the author of "Moral Agency" has become the advocate of this writer, and accused his brother, the *Presbyterian*, with having *defamed* his character, p. 7. by censuring his language, he, it may be fairly presumed, would use the same expressions. In this section then, and those that immediately follow, we shall find Calvin adopting similar language; or we must conclude, that, if he were to rise from the dead, he would unite his voice with the voice of the Presbyterian, in condemning such language as *unwarrantable and dangerous*. Let the reader search for himself, and he will discover no such expressions. But as many may be unwilling to submit to this trouble, a specimen or two of the language of Calvin shall be given.

"When similar objections were formerly made to AUGUSTINE, he was obliged to write his treatise *On Correction and Grace:* in which, though he copiously refutes them, he calls his adversaries to this conclusion: 'O man, in the commandment learn what is your duty; in correction learn, that through your own fault you have it not; in prayer learn whence you may receive what you wish to enjoy.' There is nearly the same argument in the treatise *On the Spirit and Letter*, in which he maintains, that God does not *regulate the precepts of his law by the* ABILITY *of men*, but when he hath com-

manded what is right, freely gives to his elect *ability* to perform it. This is not a subject that requires a prolix discussion. First, We are not alone in this cause, but have the support of Christ and all the apostles. Let our opponents consider how they can obtain the superiority in a contest with such antagonists. Does Christ, who declares that without him we can do nothing, on that account the less reprehend and punish those who without him do what is evil?" Inst. vol. i. p. 337. Again, in p. 341, Calvin observes, "To represent the *ability of man as coextensive with the precepts of the Divine law*, has indeed for a long time not been unusual, and has some appearance of plausibility;* but it has proceeded from the grossest ignorance of the law. For those who think it an enormous crime to say that observation of the law is *impossible*, insist on this cogent argument, that otherwise the law was given in vain. For they argue just as if Paul had never said any thing concerning the law. But, pray, what is the meaning of these expressions? 'The law was added because of transgressions;' 'the law worketh wrath;' 'the law entered that the offence might abound.' Do they imply a necessity of its being limited to our *ability*, that it might not be given in vain? Do they not rather shew that it was placed *far beyond our ability* in order to convince us of our *impotence?*"

The whole of the chapter from which we have taken these quotations, might be transcribed to exhibit the entire agreement between the views of the *Presbyterian* and those of the great Reformer.

Were the author of "Moral Agency" to undertake to reply to the comparison now made to expose the fallacy of his quotations, he would probably have recourse to the aid of the *sophism* which pervades his production. He would show, that Calvin speaks of a moral inability, and represents the sinner as inexcusable in his disobedience. But we should retort, We know it; and this only serves to make the harmony between him and the author of the Essay condemned by you, the more complete. We demand of you to produce a quotation from this chapter in his Institutes, in which he asserts, that man has *ample power*, *full ability*, to keep the commandments of God, or in which he says, that man has *natural ability* to obey the divine law, or to do *holy* actions. In vain will you search for such expressions.

* See Moral Agency, p. 32, line 26.

In p. 32. the author of "Moral Agency," quotes a passage from the Essay he is controverting, without informing the reader where it may be found. It is found in p. 21, and stands connected with the preceding page. The words are, "What is the question, then, at issue? Not whether man possesses natural faculties, but how a creature, possessing these faculties in a state so corrupted and disordered by sin as to be rendered *unable* to obey the divine law, can be justly required to yield an obedience beyond his ability?" On this passage, *Christian* remarks, "If this writer had inserted the word *morally*, before the word *unable*, and the word *moral* before *ability*, the doubt would have been removed; for every reader would have yielded, that obedience to the divine law is then justly required." Had Christian been born in the sixteenth century, to shed his light upon the world, during the life of Calvin, that author might have removed much obscurity from the chapter to which we have referred, by introducing in many parts of it the *enlightening* words *moral* and *morally*. But unfortunately our Philadelphian came into the world too late to impart his *illumination* to that illustrious reformer.

Christian has altogether mistaken the nature of the question stated in the part of the Essay to which he refers. If the reader will look at the 20th page of that essay, he will find, that the question is proposed, not as one in which Christians embracing the doctrines of grace are opponents, but as a question which is debated between infidels, on the one side, and Christians embracing the doctrines of grace on the other. All Christians of this description inculcate it "as an essential truth, that man, in his fallen state, is *unable* to keep the commandments of God;" and the following question, "How can it be just in the Creator to demand from his creatures an obedience which they are unable to yield, and then to punish them for inevitable disobedience?" is the objection which infidels urge against the truth. Now we believe the *inability* of man to be *moral*, or in other words, to be *inexcusable*; but we do not apprehend that the objection of infidels would be fairly answered merely by declaring our belief, and calling his inability *moral*. The author of "Moral Agency" may deem

this a sufficient answer; but we should regard it as a disingenuous begging of the question in dispute. To such an argument an infidel might reply, "I do not admit the inability to be *moral;* I deny your assertion; I call for proof, not assertion." The Presbyterian, aware of the true nature of the question, replies to the objection by an argument which inspired writers have taught us to urge.

Christian speaks, indeed, of other writers, who differ in their "views of man's guilt" from those of the *Presbyterian;* but as he has not condescended to favour us with quotations from their writings, we shall let his assertion pass, for as much as it may be worth. Justice, however, requires the remark, that, judging of his accuracy by his quotations from Calvin, the presumption is, that a critical examination of other "most approved writers," would deprive him of their support, as it has deprived him of the authority of the illustrious divine of Geneva.

The quotation from Dr. Watts, cited in an early part of his treatise, (p. 8.) seems to favour the views of our author; but, when closely inspected, it will be found not at all to militate against the statement made in the Essay to which he has attempted a reply. Dr. Watts observes, "Man has not lost his *natural* POWERS, to obey this law:" but he does not use either of the expressions objected to by the Presbyterian; he does not affirm that man has *full ability, ample power* to do the whole will of God; nor does he assert that fallen man has *natural ability* to fulfil *all* the commandments of the divine law. He only affirms, what no one denies, the *existence* of the *natural* POWERS (meaning FACULTIES) of human nature; that is, that man has still the faculties of understanding, will and affections, which are to be used in obeying the law of God. He expressly acknowledges, that these "faculties are *greatly corrupted* by vicious inclinations, or sinful propensities;" and then observes, in regard to the inability arising from this corruption of the natural faculties of human nature, it "has been happily called by our divines a *moral inability* to fulfil the law RATHER THAN a natural impossibility of it."

But had Dr. Watts been pressed on this subject, would he not have been compelled to acknowledge, that this ina-

bility is *natural* as well as moral? not because man has *lost* his natural faculties, but because these faculties have, by corruption, been deprived of that ability without which man cannot keep the law. The Presbyterian has, in p. 20. shown by a quotation from Fuller, who contends for a mode of expression, justly objected to as incorrect on the subject of the sinner's inability, that he expressly asserts the production "of a righteousness adequate to the demands of the law" to be NATURALLY *impossible*. In Dr. Witherspoon's Lectures on Divinity, the reader will find a very judicious remark, made by him in relation to an argument invented to meet a difficulty arising from the decrees of God, which shall be transcribed in this place as justly applicable to the subject under discussion.

"It is remarkable," says that acute divine, "that the advocates for necessity have adopted a distinction made use of for other purposes, and forced it into their service; I mean *moral* and *natural* necessity. They say natural or physical necessity takes away liberty, but moral necessity does not;—at the same time they explain moral necessity so as to make it truly physical or natural. That is physical necessity which is the invincible effect of the law of nature; and it is neither less natural, nor less unsurmountable if it is from the laws of spirit, than it would be if it were from the laws of matter."*

The spirit of this excellent remark may be fairly applied to those who imagine they have removed all difficulty in relation to man's inability to keep the commandments of God, by terming it *moral* and not *natural*; while in fact, they make it *natural* as well as moral; and some, at times, are constrained to call it natural.

"But that the unrenewed are defective of the *natural* ability," observes Christian, (p. 19. 20,) "necessary to the performance of the duties required of them, the reverend author of the Essay has not proved, nor can he do it." Now, what will the reader think, and what will *Christian* say, if it be evinced, that the author of "Moral Agency" himself has, in fact, proved the inability of man to be natural? It may be denominated natural, on two accounts: first, because it is *native*, born with him; and secondly, because it arises from a sinful corruption, or defect in his *natural* faculties.

* Witherspoon's Works, vol. iv. p. 89.

He cannot object to the first reason, for in p. 6. line 12, he allows it to be "*natural* to fallen men." In prosecuting our argument, we shall not imitate the unfair example of the CANDID *Christian*, by imputing to him an attempt which he most unjustly imputes to the *Presbyterian;* an attempt to prove the monstrous absurdity, that man is destitute of ALL natural ability. We design to evince, that he has placed the inability in a *natural* faculty, and made it to result from a *defect* in that natural faculty. In p. 32, line 6, he affirms, that nothing but "a want of heart" prevents a sinner's compliance with his duty; and in p. 10, line 26, he tells us, in the form of an interrogatory, that his "incapacity springs merely from the indisposition of the *heart* or *will.*" It appears, then, that the inability arises from the state of THE WILL. Now he cannot deny, that this state or indisposition of the will is a *defect* in the will; for, in p. 31. last line, he calls it a *defect:* nor can he deny that this defect is insuperable by any human power; for this he every where inculcates: and, in p. 9, line 33, he affirms, "that it amounts to a self-created or voluntary *necessity* of sinning; from which no one is ever saved without special grace."

To render our proof complete, it only remains to mention, that the will is a *natural* faculty; and that it is so denominated by the author of "Moral Agency" in various places.

After all his labour, then, to show that the inability of man is not *natural*, the result is, that *he himself* has made it natural, not only by allowing it to be native to fallen man, born with him; but by teaching, that it arises from an indisposition, a *defect* in a *natural* faculty, insuperable by any power less than the Almighty power of God; and, surprising! in page 22, line 19, he admits, that it proceeds *in part* "from a *defect* in" man's "*natural powers;*" for, speaking of a sinner, he says, "his disappointment arises, *not so much from a defect* in his NATURAL POWERS, which are as well suited to the service of God as of sin; his chief mistake lies in depending on his supposed moral abilites."

The reader is invited to examine the several steps in the reasoning that has led us to the conclusion, that the author of "Moral Agency," who so stoutly contends in favour of the *natural* ability of unrenewed sinners to

keep the law of God, does in fact make this inability NATURAL, as well as moral. To enable him to try the fairness of our representation of this writer, and to test the correctness of the process of our argument, we have set down, not only the page, but the line where he may find the quotations made.

Thus the author of "Moral Agency" furnishes another proof how the use of the phrases to which the writer on "Inability" objects, "betrays their advocates into *contradictory statements.*"* If more evidence of the truth of this observation be required, it can be given. In p. 33, near the bottom, he distinguishes between the *action itself* and the *quality* of the action; and affirms, (p. 34,) that "to effect a volition or action, natural ability is necessary; that the volition should be holy, also moral ability." Here, then, he admits that natural ability is sufficient for the production of the action, but not for the production of the holy quality of the action, which demands moral ability. Yet (in p. 32, at the top,) he affirms that "a person destitute of moral ability may possess *full and ample natural ability* to perform his duty." These statements we maintain to be contradictory. What is duty? What does God demand from us? Merely the action? or both the action and its holy quality? *Christian* has answered these inquiries, by an interrogatory, addressed to his brother: "Would he do what he has no authority from his Master to do, require duties which are *not holy*, and demand less than God has charged him to require, the heart?" p. 20. If, then, holy actions constitute duty, to affirm in one place that a holy action cannot be produced without *moral ability*, and to affirm in another place that "a person destitute of moral ability, may possess *full and ample natural ability* to perform duty" or holy actions, is in our apprehension a palpable contradiction.

Should the distinction between the action and its quality be admitted in reference to some external and many mental moral actions, can it be made in reference to the great duty which God requires of us, love to himself? Can you distinguish between the act of loving the true character of God, and the quality of that love? Can we love the true God except with a holy love? Can the carnal mind, which an apostle affirms to be enmity against God, per-

* P. 18.

form the action of loving God? Has a person, destitute of moral ability, or love to God, *full and ample natural ability* to perform his duty; that is, *to love Jehovah?* A soul filled with enmity has ample natural ability to love God!! When natural ability shall enable a man to overcome the enmity of his heart and inspire him with love, then, but not before, can it be pronounced full and ample for the performance of duty.

Again, in p. 9, he exhibits the natural ability of man in a qualified manner. "It is most unjust, on the other hand," he observes, "to allege, that to assert that men have *sufficient natural ability* to obey the law, and perform its duties, PROVIDED *they have a heart to do so*, is to flatter their pride and encourage delay." Here sufficient natural ability is predicated under a condition. The author maintains, not that such ability is possessed when the sinner has no heart to do his duty, but that it is possessed when he has a heart to do it. Now a heart to do duty being equivalent (as he admits in page 32, line 6.) to moral ability, his assertion amounts to this: men have sufficient natural ability to obey the law, when they have moral ability to obey it. But no man, he must and does allow, possesses this moral ability, till Almighty God has changed his heart by his grace, and given him spiritual life. Yet in another place this author affirms, as we have just seen, that "a person who is *destitute* of moral ability, may possess *full and ample natural ability* to perform his duty;" and then, in another place, which we have also noticed, he admits, that there is a DEFECT in the sinner's *natural powers*. Are not these palpable contradictions?

To remark on every thing of an exceptionable nature in "Moral Agency," would extend this review beyond reasonable limits. Passing by misrepresentations of the "Inability of Sinners," that have not been noticed, as well as other particulars on which animadversions might be made, we shall only trespass farther on the reader's patience, while we institute a contrast between the views of this author and the views of the composers of our excellent standards of doctrine on two points.

1. In regard to the mode of divine operation on the human faculties in the work of regeneration, or effectual calling. Speaking of the effect of regenerating grace our author observes, (p. 15.) it "changes the *heart*, removes th

prejudices, and thus enlightens the *understanding*." In this statement, if it be not intimated that the understanding needs no other illumination than that which results from a change produced in the heart, it is, at least, asserted that the understanding is enlightened through that change which divine grace effects in the heart. A fine specimen of mental philosophy! No such inversion of order is made in our confession of faith; for that admirable exhibition of divine truth teaches us, that the understanding, as well as the heart, is wrought upon by the grace of God; and that the understanding is enlightened by his Spirit, who reaches the heart through this leading faculty of the human soul. Speaking of effectual calling (chap. x. sec. 1.) it arranges the faculties in their proper order; and we are taught that God "effectually calls sinners"—by "enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to *understand* the things of God; taking away their *heart of stone*, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing *their wills*, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good," &c.

2. In regard to the seat of the sinner's inability. The author of "Moral Agency" supposes that the only difficulty in the way of his obedience lies in the will, and that this faculty being renewed by divine grace, the understanding becomes enlightened as a matter of course. In conformity with this notion he endeavours to explain the declaration of our Lord, "No man *can* come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." In the explanation of this text, we have shown, that in the context our Saviour inculcates expressly the necessity of a divine teaching, and the necessity of the renovation of the will only by implication; and that, although our author admits an inability of a moral kind, yet he supposes this declaration to be equivalent in meaning to another made by our divine instructor, on a different occasion: "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life." (See Moral Ability, p. 17.) In p. 8. he observes, "If the inability which prevents faith, be a mere defect of understanding to discern the truth, or of evidence to make it clear, the party is to be pitied, not blamed; but if an aversion to holiness determines the WILL to direct the understanding to other objects, the party is culpable." Again, in the next page he affirms, "To induce men to believe that there is any

other supernatural influence or aid necessary, than that which is to remedy *moral* inability, or help them 'to will and to do' what they are already bound unto, and have natural talents for, is to furnish them with an excuse." His opinion on this point does not appear to have been settled, when he began to write his Essay; for (p. 6.) he asserts of the sinner, "His *deadness in sin* is CHIEFLY, *if not only*, meant of that indisposition to holiness, which, resembling the insensibility of a lifeless corpse, renders the party, as to *every mental faculty*, dormant to the evidence of spiritual truth, and the motives to moral good." Here he manifestly hesitates in placing all sin in the *indisposition of the* WILL *to holiness:* but advancing in his discussion, and drawing additional sparks from the collision of his own thoughts, he grows bolder; for speaking of man's being *dead in sin*, he asserts (p. 10.) in the form of an interrogatory, "That this incapacity springs MERELY *from indisposition of the* HEART, or WILL;" and then fortifies himself by quoting a few words from the last Assembly's Narrative on the state of religion, which passed through inadvertence; and were detected at a period of the sessions too late to admit of correction consistently with the rules of the house.

From the explanation of the scriptural phrase "*dead in sin*," given by our author, we dissent; because we believe its meaning embraces more than *unwillingness* to keep the commandments of God. We do indeed maintain, and so we preach, that *the will* of man is depraved, and averse to holiness, and that this corruption of his will indisposes him for the doing of actions that really come within the compass of his unrenewed powers. We deem it important to insist on this point for the conviction of sinners, and to deprive them of that excuse they attempt to draw from a perverted view of man's inability, at the very time they do not believe the doctrine. We deem it important to charge home upon the consciences of our hearers, with all our might, that solemn reproof of our Lord: "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life;" and that awful declaration, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men *loved darkness*, rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

But while we deem it important to inculcate one point

of doctrine, we cannot regard it as consistent with attachment to truth, or fidelity to our master, to conceal another of like importance. We therefore teach, because we believe, that the corruption of the fall is not *partial, but total*; pervading, not one merely, but all the faculties of man; and that he is *unable*, as well as *unwilling*, to perform his whole duty. The image of God, in which he was originally created, consisted in an understanding so enlightened as to discern the whole extent of duty, as well as in a holy will inclined to obey the dictates of the understanding, and pure affections delighting in truth and duty: and consequently, the loss of this divine image consists in a deprivation of spiritual discernment in the mind, as well as of rectitude in the will, and of purity and order in the affections. From the brief history of human apostacy given by the pen of inspiration, we learn that that mournful event and dreadful work commenced, not in the *will*, but in the *understanding:* and accordingly we find that Paul, when alluding to it, says, "The woman being *deceived*, was in the transgression;" and in another place, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent *beguiled* Eve through his subtilty, so your *minds* should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."* Indeed, it is not to be conceived how Satan could possibly have corrupted the will of an innocent rational creature, in any other way than through his understanding; for as long as that faculty retained its light and was free from deception, it was impossible for Satan to seduce him into an act of disobedience, by eating of the forbidden fruit.

A similar order is observable in the process of divine grace in that great work by which fallen man is restored from his apostacy. It begins with the understanding, which it enlightens, and passes on to the other faculties; imparting rectitude to the will and purity to the affections: for until the mind is so enlightened by the spirit as to know duty, the will cannot choose it; and until the mind is favoured with a discovery of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, the heart cannot love that glory. In accordance with this statement, we are taught by an inspired apostle, that the image of God which is restored to man consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.† When the commission was given to the great Apostle, to

* 1 Tim. ii. 14. 2 Cor. xi. 3. † Col. iii. 10. Ephes. iv. 24.

preach to the Gentiles, he was sent "to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light," and thus to convert them "from the power of Satan unto God."* The process of the work of divine grace in effectually calling sinners, may be, in some instances, very short; yet the universal experience of converts in adult age, will prove, that this glorious work is begun in the illumination of the mind.

We may be indulged while we introduce in this place, two valuable extracts from the writings of the celebrated Charnock. Speaking of the fall and recovery of man, he observes,

"It was not only the head, or only the heart, only the understanding, or only the will, that was overspread with the blackness of sin; but every part of man lost its original rectitude. Not a faculty could boast of itself, like the Pharisees, and say, It was not *like this* or that *publican*; the waves of sin had gone over the heads of every one of them. Sin, like a leaven, had infected the whole mass. Grace overspreads every faculty to drive out the contagion. Grace is compared to the light, and light is more or less in every part of the air above the horizon, for the expulsion of darkness, when the sun arises. The Spirit is compared to fire, and therefore pierceth every part with its warmth, as heat diffuseth itself from the fire to every part of water. The natural man is denominated, not an old understanding, or an old will, but the *old man*. Ephes. iv. 22. So a regenerate man is not called a new understanding, or a new will, but a *new man*. Ephes. iv. 24." Again, in the next page: "At the first moment of infusing grace, the *body of death* has its deadly wound in *every* faculty, understanding, will, conscience, affections. The rectitude reaches every part; and all the powers of the soul, by a strong combination, by one common principle of grace acting on them, conspire together to be subject to the law of God, and advance in the way of holiness. Psalm cxix. 10. It is with the whole heart that God is sought. In the understanding, there is light instead of darkness, whereby it yields to the wisdom of God, and searches into the will of God; *the spirit of the mind is renewed*. Eph. iv. 23. In the will there is softness instead of hardness, humility instead of pride; whereby it yields to the will of God, and closes with the law of God. In the heart and conscience there is purity instead of uncleanness; whereby it is purged of dead works, settled against the approbation of sin; and a resolution to be void of offence. Heb. ix. 14; Acts xxiv. 16. In the affections there is love instead of enmity, delight instead of weariness; whereby they yield to the pleasure of God, have flights into the bosom of God: *O how I love thy law! It is my delight day*

* Acts xxvi. 18.

and night. The memory is a repository for the precepts and promises of God, as the choicest treasure. It is likeness to Christ; the whole human nature of Christ was holy, every faculty of his soul, every member of his body, his nature holy, his heart holy. If we are not so formed, Christ is not formed in us: look therefore whether your reformation you rest in, be in the whole, and in every part of the soul." Charnock's works, vol. iv. p. 296, 297.

With this representation of man both in his original and in his fallen condition, the language of our standards of doctrine accords exactly. "After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endowed with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, having the law written in their hearts and power to fulfil it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto *change*," &c. Confession of Faith, chap. iv. sec. 2. "By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and *wholly* defiled in *all* the faculties and parts of soul and body." Chap. vi. sec. 2. To furnish the reader with a still clearer view of the belief of the composers of our excellent Confession of Faith, we shall cite a few answers to questions in the Larger Catechism in which they have expressed their ideas more fully. In the answer to question 17. it is stated, that God made man "in his own image, in *knowledge*, righteousness, and holiness." "The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of *Adam's* first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, *disabled*, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called *original sin*, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions." Ans. to q. 25. See also the answers to 67th, 190th, and 192d questions; in all which the *inability* as well as *unwillingness* of man is inculcated, together with the important truth, that both the *ability* and the *disposition* to do good come from God as free gifts.

Thus it appears, that there is a manifest difference be- the views of the author of "Moral Agency," and the views of the composers of our admirable standards of doctrines,

on two points. He asserts that the inability of man lies wholly in the corruption of the *will;* they declare that it results from the corruption of *all the faculties* of our nature, and that man is at once *unwilling* and *unable* to obey the law: he maintains that in regeneration the *will* is first changed, and that THUS the *understanding* is enlightened; they teach us that divine grace operates *first* on the *understanding*, and then on the will, and affections; imparting light to the one, and rectitude and purity to the other faculties.

The sum of our review is this: We have convicted our friend and brother of gross inconsistencies in doing the very things he condemns in another;—we have exposed the numerous misrepresentations that are spread over his pages;—we have shown that he entirely misunderstood the design of the Essay he attempted to refute; and consequently that it was not possible for him to write an intelligent answer;—we have evinced, that his arguments are sophistical, and wander from the question in debate;—we have detected several palpable contradictions, and proved that, after all his labour and toil, he has himself made the inability of man to be *natural*, by placing it in a *natural faculty;*—we have deprived him of the authorities on which he depended for support, by showing that they agree not with him, but with his opponent, in their views and language;—and we have proved that our standards do not use the phraseology for which he contends; and that they differ from him in two points of doctrine. All this we humbly think has been fairly made out.

It has probably been observed by the intelligent reader, that, although the *Christian* and the *Presbyterian* differ in some points of doctrine, yet they agree in ascribing to man the faculties of understanding, will, and affections, and consequently some ability to man, even in his present, fallen state; in making a distinction between natural and moral ability; in representing the sinner as inexcusable in his disobedience; and in inculcating the absolute necessity of an entire change of nature, produced by the mighty grace of God. In this view of the points of agreement between them, he will perceive, that the controversy in a great measure relates to the propriety of using certain

phrases; and some may feel disposed to ask, where is the necessity for contending so earnestly about terms, when writers agree in meaning? We reply, that in speaking on important points in theology, correctness of expression is a matter of great consequence, and that hurtful errors have been propagated by the use of improper terms, even when the meaning of those who first used them was correct.

"I really abominate contentions about words," says Calvin, "which disturb the church without producing any good effect: but I think that we ought religiously to avoid words which signify any *absurdity*, particularly when they lead to a pernicious error. How few are there, pray, who, when they hear free-will attributed to man, do not immediately conceive, that he has the sovereignty over his own mind and will, and is able by his innate power to incline himself to whatever he pleases? But it will be said, all danger from these expressions will be removed, if the people are carefully apprised of their signification. But, on the contrary, the human mind is naturally so prone to falsehood, that it will sooner imbibe error from one single expression, than truth from a prolix oration: of which we have a more certain experiment than could be wished in this very word. For neglecting that explanation of the fathers, almost all their successors have been drawn into a fatal self-confidence, by adhering to the original and proper signification of the word." Instit. vol. i. p. 278, 279.

And it ought not to be forgotten, that attention to propriety and correctness of expression, forms the subject of an apostolic injunction: for the aged Paul, writing to his beloved Timothy, says, "hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. i. 14.

We are aware, that it may be said, in regard to the phrases condemned by the *Presbyterian*, that the labours of some who use them, have been eminently blest by the Great Head of the Church. Granted; and we honour them for their success; but we cannot admit that their success is at all to be attributed to the misapplication, which they make of a distinction between natural and moral ability. We cannot believe, that proclaiming to sinners that they have *full ability*, *ample power*, to obey God's holy law, or that they have *natural ability* to do *all* that is required of them, has any tendency to convince

them, that they are *poor*, helpless offenders, who are *utterly unable* to deliver themselves from the wrath to come. The success of a minister of the gospel is to be ascribed, not to *error*, either in doctrine, or in expression, but to the blessing of God on the TRUTH which he inculcates. We do believe, that the expressions condemned by the Presbyterian, are calculated to disseminate erroneous ideas of truth; that, "the original and proper signification of the" terms is calculated to inspire "a fatal self confidence;" and to dispose a man to "conceive that he has the sovereignty over his own mind and will, and is able by his *innate power* to incline himself to whatever he pleases."*

Where is the necessity for using these expressions? Cannot their advocates teach what they mean in other words, and thus avoid the danger of making wrong impressions? Can they not assert, that man has the faculties of understanding, will and affections, and that he is solemnly bound to use these faculties in loving and serving his Creator? Can they not maintain the distinction between natural and moral ability, and that man has ability to do many things? Can they not inculcate the important truth, that the sinner is inexcusable in his transgressions of the divine law? Can they not proclaim all these important truths, without declaring that he has *ample power*, *full ability*, or that he has *natural ability*, to keep all the commandments of God? Or if any wish to teach, as Christian does, and what we do not believe, that the sinner's inability lies solely in the will, cannot this too be done, without the use of those phrases, which evidently convey a meaning beyond their intention?

But our author, having asserted that his brother's Essay furnishes an *apology for sinning*, will probably insist on retaining his phraseology, lest he should lie open to the same charge; not being aware, that the accusation can be brought against *his* production, for the same reason that it is brought against the Essay on which he has made his remarks.

Why is the charge brought against that Essay? Does the Essay maintain that the sinner is excusable? We

* Calvin.

have shown that it maintains the contrary. Does it strip man of those intellectual and moral powers, that are necessary to constitute him an accountable agent? We have seen that it attributes to man all these faculties. Does it deprive him of *all* natural ability? Certainly not. On what ground then is the charge rested? Does the Essay combat the distinction between natural and moral ability? No; it admits, and illustrates that distinction; and the reader who compares what the *Christian* and the *Presbyterian* have said on that point, may decide which author is most correct in his statement and illustration. Does the Essay deny the inability of man to be *moral?* It expressly terms it *moral.* What then is the reason? Is it because the Presbyterian affirms the inability to be *natural,* as well as moral? He does indeed admit it to be natural for two reasons; because it is native, born with fallen man, and because it is owing to a sinful corruption of all his natural faculties. And does not Christian admit the inability to be natural? Does he not expressly call it natural, as belonging to man's fallen nature; and does he not place it in one of his natural faculties? Has he not asserted that it amounts to a *necessity of sinning?*

The same objection then that lies against the doctrine of the Presbyterian, must lie with equal force against the doctrine of the Christian. The question, How is it consistent with justice to demand sinless obedience from man to a law, which, in consequence of the corruption of his nature and all his natural faculties by sin, he is unable thus to obey? is equally applicable to both. Now to imagine, as the author of "Moral Agency" does, p. 32, that the difficulty is completely removed, by the potent efficacy of a single word; and that by denominating the inability *moral,* all will then admit, that obedience is justly required; betrays a misapprehension of the meaning and force of the question. Reflecting readers will inquire what is meant by the term *moral;* and by investigating "Moral Agency," they will find that its author cannot, consistently with his own concessions, mean either that the inability is not *natural,* or that it does not arise from a *defect* in a *natural power or faculty;* and of course, that it must mean

inexcusable or *blamable*. This, to be sure, is a very compendious method for removing the difficulty. Christian will, perhaps, reply, "I mean more by the term; that the inability does not arise from the want of the mental faculties which belong to human nature." But we should like to ask him, Who ever contended that man is destitute of those mental faculties? and whether he cannot see, that the very objection is grounded on the admission of the fact, that man is possessed of these faculties? Such a method of meeting the difficulty, may satisfy those who are willing to rely on authority; but it will not satisfy minds calling for proof, not assertion.

We believe, that man is *really unable* to obey the law of God, and that this fact is established by uniform experience, and by plain declaration of inspired truth. Yet we fully believe that he is inexcusable in his disobedience; for this conclusive reason, because a just and holy God demands from him that very obedience which he has become incapable of yielding, by the corruption of his nature. That perfect obedience is required from him, is manifest from the language of the law, the sum of which is perfect love to God and to his neighbour: and it is equally certain, that every deviation from this rule of rectitude is sin; for an inspired writer has defined sin to be a transgression of the law. Now we hold it to be indubitably true, that our Supreme Lawgiver can require nothing from his creatures but what is right, and that in the infinite perfections of his nature they have ample security, that he will demand from them no obedience but what it is just to demand, and what they ought to render. If, then, he does require from man perfect obedience, then man must be under imperious obligations to yield perfect obedience; and consequently inexcusable in every failure of sinless conformity to the law. To assert that man is not blamable in breaking the law, is to impeach the equity of the great Lawgiver, and to maintain that his law is unreasonable and unjust; for if his law is reasonable and just, every violation of it must be blamable; and sin can be excused in no other way than by reflecting on the equity and goodness of the law, and consequently of the Lawgiver.

It appears, then, that Jehovah holds every transgressor

of his law to be guilty; and therefore, if we revere the judgment of infinite wisdom and justice, we shall not pretend to justify the offender, but bow to the judgment of the Judge of all the earth, who cannot but do right.

Another proof that the sinner, how disqualified soever by the depravity of his nature for yielding that holy obedience demanded from him, is inexcusable, we find in the operations of the Holy Spirit on the soul, in the process of conversion. What are the important truths which he then inculcates? Does he foster the pride of the sinner's heart by inflating him with an imaginary idea of his native ability to keep the law? He doubtless convinces him that he has done many things which he might have avoided, and neglected many things which he might have done. But does he ever inculcate it on his mind as a truth, that he had *ample ability* to repent and believe, and that on this ground he is chargeable with guilt in not having repented and believed? Does he not, on the contrary, generally make sinners sensibly feel their *utter inability* to perform these duties in a right manner; and under deep impressions of their helpless condition, does he not stir them up to supplicate grace from that glorious Redeemer, "who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and the remission of sins;"* before he communicates those enriching blessings of heaven? And is it not a fact to which experimental Christians can bear testimony, that, at the moment in which they felt their impotence and helplessness the most deeply, and were the most feelingly alive to a sense of their entire dependence on the grace of God for conversion and deliverance from the dominion of sin, they were the most thoroughly convinced of the equity of the law in requiring duties which they were unable to perform? It is by means of the law that the Holy Spirit exposes to the sinner's view his wretched and perishing condition; for Paul tells us, that it was in this way he discovered his deplorable state, and was awakened from the pleasing dreams of self-righteousness which he had indulged; "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."† And the result of the clear perceptions

* Acts v. 31. † Rom. vii. 7.

of the spiritual requirements of the divine law, which he gained in the light of the Spirit, was, not a higher estimation either of his natural or his moral ability, but a humiliating conviction of the impotence of both; not a justification of his offences on the ground of his inability, but a conviction of the excellence of the law, and consequently of the justice of his condemnation on account of his transgressions.

"But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin *revived*, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which was good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Rom. vii. 8—14.

A sinner before he has had an experimental conviction of the impotence of his depraved nature, and before he fully believes this humiliating fact, may attempt to apologize for his offences, by alleging his inability to obey the divine law. But when the Spirit of God convinces him, by a close application of the vast requirements of the law to his conscience, that he really is unable to comply with them, then, deprived of this vain apology, he falls self-condemned under the curse of a broken law. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," he exclaims with Job; "but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I *abhor* myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Indeed, may not this subject be placed in such a light, that the judgment even of the unrenewed man shall be constrained to pronounce at once in favour of the equity of the law, and of the impotence of man? What is the sum of the divine commandments? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."* Is not this requirement most just and

* Deut. vi. 5.

reasonable? Can Jehovah, consistently with the honour due to his glorious perfections, and the relation of man to him, demand less? Yet, where is the mortal, saint or sinner, now in existence on earth, who does or *can* fulfil this high and righteous requirement in all its extent? Look over the pages of sacred history, and point us to the man, the patriarch, the prophet, or the apostle, who, while tabernacling in the flesh, reached the glorious attainment? What man ever lived, and sinned not? What mortal could in truth ever say, I am perfect, I have ability to love God as much as he requires? Will *Christian* assert, that such a man ever existed since the fall of Adam? Well, if no man is able to love God as much as he demands, and if the requirement of God is just and reasonable, how can the inability of man plead his excuse? Must he not be blamable for his want of compliance with the righteous commandment of infinite perfections, notwithstanding his impotence to meet the high demands? and must not this impotence arise from some *sinful* disorder, some *inexcusable* corruption of his nature?

We find this to be the fact. The inspired pages assure us, "that God made man *upright;* but *they* have sought out many inventions." Eccles. vii. 29. They assure us, that man was "created in the image" of his Creator, "in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;" but that by his wilful apostacy he lost this image, and that by "one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Rom. vi. 19. As therefore the corruption of man, and his consequent impotence, proceeded from himself, it is just in God to demand from him obedience commensurate with his original power, and to condemn him for every transgression of his pure and holy law.

In conclusion of this long review, permit us to assure *Christian*, that we do not doubt of his being what his name imports, a real disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ; but, at the same time, we must lament the temper too apparent in his production; and were we to detail to him the many observations made on this subject, by his brethren in the ministry, he might be inclined to believe he wrote under the influence of unduly excited feelings. We are truly grieved at having been under the necessity of

taking notice of his inconsistencies, of exposing his misrepresentations, and refuting his unjust accusations. It would have gratified us to have found in his remarks nothing but fair arguments, so that in replying we should have had nothing to do but to meet argument with argument.

Indeed, after reading "Moral Agency," we felt reluctant to undertake the unpleasant business of answering it; because we saw it would require us, *in justification of ourselves*, to expose things that we could have wished for the *author's sake* had never been published. If the reader will attentively compare this review with "Moral Agency," he will, we think, justify what we have done on the ground of *self-defence;* and allow that we have abstained from that severity of animadversion, which the contents of that production would have warranted.

The writer on "The Inability of Sinners" it appears, is known; his brethren at New York were pleased to affix to that Essay what they deemed a characteristic signature. As we have no scruples of conscience in using an *appellative*, in place of a proper, name, we shall subscribe ourselves

A PRESBYTERIAN.